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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 2547
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0511
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0152
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0617
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RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 4630
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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 7504
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Tony Blairs' Mission
- [1](#)2. Syria

Key Stories in the Media:

Ha'aretz reported that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert made a new offer
to Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas: both parties would

negotiate an "agreement of principles" for the establishment of a Palestinian state on most of the territory of the West Bank and Gaza (90%). Two other major points of the proposal are an exchange of territory so that the large settlements blocks stay in Israel and construction of a tunnel connecting Gaza and the West Bank. The PM believes there is no point in discussing yet the critical issues of final borders, Jerusalem, and refugees.

Israel Radio quoted a statement released by the State Department that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will travel to the region next week and that she is expected to visit Israel and the PA.

The media reported that PM Olmert met Quartet Special Envoy Tony Blair on Wednesday. Olmert told Blair that Israel will ease restrictions in the West Bank in order to allow Palestinians greater freedom of movement.

Leading media reported that Blair also met with Palestinian figures on Tuesday. PA President Abbas was reported to have told Blair that it is time to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and achieve a two-state solution.

All media noted that Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib and Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit arrived in Israel on Wednesday. Israel Radio reported that in their meeting with President Shimon Peres the two said that they are reaching out for peace in the name of all the countries in the region. They were also reported as saying that they hope Israel will respond positively to the Arab peace initiative.

Ha'aretz cited IDF intelligence officers as saying to the Ministerial Forum on the Northern Front that Syria has no intentions to attack Israel.

Leading media reported that an Israeli attempt to kill a senior Islamic Jihad commander in Gaza failed on Tuesday.

Ha'aretz reported that right-wing settlers will try to build a new outpost on the Eitam Hill near Efrat in Gush Etzion. The police and IDF forces will try to prevent this.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that dozens of students from a-Najah University in Nablus were injured yesterday in clashes between Hamas and Fatah supporters at the university. One sustained critical injuries.

Leading media reported that the Winograd Committee intends to examine suspicions raised a few months ago by International Amnesty that the IDF used cluster bombs during the Second Lebanon War.

All media reported that after the Histadrut labor union and Finance Ministry representatives failed yesterday to reach a breakthrough in negotiations, the Histadrut declared a general strike on Wednesday. The airport is not yet on strike but could shut down on Thursday.

----- 1. Tony Blairs' Mission: -----

Summary: -----

The popular, pluralist Maariv published a letter written by Former IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon to the Quartet special envoy to the Middle East, Tony Blair: "Your defined task is to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but make no mistake, it is not the most important conflict at present. The most important conflict is between Jihadist Islam and the West. Jihadist Islam cannot be defeated without defeating the regimes and organizations that support and feed it, and their ideology."

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Israel must not miss the offered opportunity: the appointment of a friendly leader who has proven his support for Israel during difficult times, as the representative of the international community in the region.... Now is an opportune moment for diplomacy following years of confrontation and impasse"

Block Quotes:

I. "A Letter to Tony Blair"

The popular, pluralist Maariv published a letter written by Former IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon to the Quartet special envoy to the Middle East, Tony Blair (07/25): "I deeply appreciate your willingness to enlist to help solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is more than 100 years old.... As someone who read and listened to the statements you made as the prime minister of Britain, I am afraid that you too are going to fail unless you are capable of shedding the accepted but completely irrelevant perceptions about this conflict. I heard you say on numerous occasions that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a condition for stabilizing the Middle East.... Many people in Israel too (including in the political echelon) do not understand that the governing conflict in the region is not territorial but ideological in nature, and one does not defeat an ideology by means of concessions.... What, then, would I suggest be done? I would suggest forgetting about pressuring Israel, which would look, on the face of things, to be a short-range achievement, and to try to help and to persuade the Palestinians to adopt a long-term strategy that principally involves an educational, political and economic reform that might facilitate the creation of a civil society that sanctifies life rather than death, that holds dear human rights and liberties, that develops a middle class and not a corrupt and wealthy elite.... Your defined task is to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but make no mistake, it is not the most important conflict at present. The most important conflict is between Jihadist Islam and the West. Jihadist Islam cannot be defeated without defeating the regimes and organizations that support and feed it, and their ideology.... With your status, with your experience and with your liberation from politics and mainly from political correctness, you can contribute to all that."

II. "Help Blair Help Us"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (07/25): "Tony Blair, who began his mission to the area this week, has international standing and extensive political experience. But he will also require the goodwill of his Quartet bosses -- U.S. President George W. Bush first and foremost -- and of the Israeli government and Palestinian Authority to succeed in his mission to ready the Palestinians for independent statehood. Israel must not miss the offered opportunity: the appointment of a friendly leader who has proven his support for Israel during difficult times, as the representative of the international community in the region.... Now is an opportune moment for diplomacy following years of confrontation and impasse ... President Bush wants to help, and so do the leaders of Egypt and Jordan; and diplomatic progress will bolster Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's political position and stabilize his hold on power. Blair's mission is a reflection of the international community's interest in solving the conflict. In such promising circumstances, Israel must take the initiative and stand at the head of efforts to bolster the Fatah government in the West Bank and renew negotiations for a final-status agreement.... During the past year and a half, the international Quartet has stood firm on Israel's side versus the Hamas government.... Contrary to all earlier expectations, the international community maintained its internal unity and did not falter in its stance. Now that the Abbas-Fayad government has been stabilized in the West Bank, and Blair's mission has begun, it is Israel's turn to contribute its part."

2. Syria:

Summary:

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "To weaken the front against him, Bush aspires to release Syrian President Bashar Assad from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's embrace. A signal from Assad about a less anti-American policy will find an ear in Washington, in the spirit of the recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton report last fall."

Block Quotes:

"Free Assad"

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (07/25): "To weaken the front against him, Bush aspires to release Syrian President Bashar Assad from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's embrace. A signal from Assad about a less anti-American policy will find an ear in Washington, in the spirit of the recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton report last fall. It could be that a real renewal of a Jerusalem-Washington-Damascus dialogue will come only after the stabilization of new

administrations in Israel and America. An especially intriguing possibility would be a Clinton-Assad-Barak trio, with Hillary instead of Bill, Bashar instead of Hafez and the new Ehud, an embodiment of the old Ehud. But even during the period the Bush administration has left, it is worth relating to the messages being exchanged in the American-Syrian channel not as expressions of rigid hostility, but as bargaining positions."

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